Uncle Tom in England.

THE

LONDON TIMES

ON

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

A REVIEW

From the London Times of Friday, September 3d, 1852.

EVILS OF SLAVERY—METHOD OF ITS REMOVAL—DANGER OF AGITATION—COLONIZATION, &c.

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AMERICAN SLAVERY.

ENGLISH OPINION OF "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN."

EVILS OF SLAVERY—METHOD OF ITS REMOVAL—DANGERS OF AGITATION—COLONIZATION, &c.

From the London Times, Friday September, 3.

Twenty thousand copies of this book, according to its title-page, are circulating among the American people, but three times as many thousands more have probably been issued from the American press since the title page was written. According to the *Boston Traveller*, the authoress has already received from her publishers the sum of "$10,000 as her copyright premium on three months' sales of the work—we believe the largest sum of money ever received by any author, either American or European, from the sale of a single work in so short a period of time." Uncle Tom's Cabin is at every railway book-stall in England, and in every third traveler's hand. The book is a decided hit. It takes its place with "Pickwick," with Louis Napoleon, with the mendicant who suddenly discovers himself heir to £20,000 a year, and, in fact, with every man whose good fortune it has been to fall asleep Nobody, and to awake in the morning an institution in the land. It is impossible not to feel respect for Uncle Tom's Cabin.

The object of the work is revealed in the pictorial frontispiece. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe is an abolitionist, and her book is a vehement and unrestrained argument in favor of her creed. She does not preach a sermon, for men are accustomed to nap and nod under the pulpit: she does not indite a philosophical discourse, for philosophy is exacting, is solicitous for truth, and scorns exaggeration. Nor does the lady condescend to survey her intricate subject in the capacity of a judge, for the judicial seat is fixed high above human passion, and she is in no temper to mount it. With the instinct of her sex, the clever authoress takes the shortest road to her purpose, and strikes at the convictions of her readers by assailing their hearts. She cannot hold the scales of justice with a steady hand, but she has learnt to perfection the craft of the advocate. *Euclid*, she well knows, is no child for effecting social revolutions, but an impassioned song may set a world in conflagration. Who shall deny to a true woman the use of her true weapons? We are content to warn the unsuspecting reader of their real presence!

Perhaps there is, after all, but one method of carrying on a crusade, and that unscrupulous fighting is the rightful warfare of the crusader. Mrs. Stowe having made up her mind that slavery is an abomination in the sight of God and man, thinks of nothing but the annihilation of the pernicious system. From the first page of her narrative to the last, this idea is paramount in her mind, and colors all her drawing. That she will secure proselytes we take for granted; for it is in the nature of enthusiasm to inoculate with passionate zeal the strong-hearted as well as the feeble-minded. That she will convince the world of the purity of her own motives and of the hatefulness of the sin she denounces, is equally clear; but that she will help, in the slightest degree towards the removal of the gigantic evil that afflicts her soul, is a point upon which we may express the greatest doubt; nay, is a matter upon which, unfortunately, we have very little doubt at all, inasmuch, as

we are certain that the very readiest way to rivet the fetters of slavery in these critical times is to direct against all slaveholders in America the opprobrium and indignation which such works as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are sure to excite.

It is scarcely necessary to give in this place and in detail the plot of Mrs. Stowe's striking production; for striking and meritorious it undoubtedly is. The lady has great skill in the delineation of character; her hand is vigorous and firm, her mastery over human feeling is unquestionable, and her humorous efforts are unimpeachable. We know of no book in which the negro character finds such successful interpretation, and appears so life-like and so fresh. The scenes in which the negroes are represented at their domestic labors or conversing with each other, reveal a familiar acquaintance with negro life, and a capacity for displaying it that cannot be mistaken. The slang of "Ethiopian Serenaders" for once gives place to thoughts and language racy of the soil, and we need not say how refreshing it is to be separated for a season from the conventional Sambo of the modern stage. But even as an artist Mrs. Stowe is not faultless. She exhibits but ordinary ability in the construction of her story. Her narrative is rather a succession of detached scenes than a compact, well-jointed whole; and many of the scenes are tedious from their similarity and repetition. The reader is interested in the fate of two heroes, but their own streams of adventure never blend. The scene closes upon Uncle Tom to open upon George Harris, and it closes upon George Harris to open upon Uncle Tom,—a style of proceeding well understood at the Adelphi Theatre, where the *facetiæ* of Wright must duly relieve the *diablerie* of O. Smith,—but certainly not yet recognized in the classic realms of art.

Uncle Tom is the slave of Mr. Shelby, the proprietor of a certain estate in Kentucky, which has fallen into disorder in consequence of the speculative habits of its owner, who, at the opening of the tale, is forced to part not only with Uncle Tom, but with a young quadroon woman named Eliza, the servant of Mrs. Shelby, and the wife of George Harris, a slave upon a neighboring estate. Uncle Tom is carried off Mr. Shelby's estate by the new purchaser, one Mr. Haly; but Eliza, dreading separation from her husband and her subsequent fate, takes flight with her child, and is ultimately joined to her mate on the free soil of Canada. The two volumes of which the book is made up are occupied, as we have hinted, with the adventures of Uncle Tom and George Harris, until the former dies a Christian martyr, and the latter becomes a model liberator in the black Republic of Liberia.

Uncle Tom is a paragon of virtue. He is more than mortal in his powers of endurance, in his devotion, in his self-denial, in his Christian profession and practice, and in his abhorrence of spirituous liquors. When Mr. Haly in his turn sold Tom to a new master, the good-natured owner informed his new acquisition that he would make him "coachy" on condition that he would not get drunk more than once a week, unless in cases of emergency; whereupon "Tom looked surprised and rather hurt, and said, I never drink, Mas'r.'" This may be taken as a keynote to the tune Tom is eternally playing for our edification and moral improvement. He always "looks surprised and rather hurt" on such occasions. He is described as a fine, powerful negro, walking through the world with a Bible in his hands, and virtuous indignation on his lips, both ready to be called into requisition on the slightest provocation, in season and out of season, at work or at play, by your leave or without it, in sorrow or in joy, for the benefit of his superiors, or for the castigation of his equals. A prominent fault of his production is indicated in these facts. In her very eagerness to accomplish her amiable intention, Mrs. Stowe ludicrously stumbles and falls very far short of her object. She should surely have contented herself with proving the infamy of the slave system, and not been

tempted to establish the superiority of the African nature over that of the Anglo-Saxon, and of every other known race.

We have read some novels in our time, and occupied not a few precious hours in the proceedings of their heroines and heroes; but we can scarcely remember ever to have encountered either gentle knight or gentler dame to whom we could not easily have brought home the imputation of human frailty. The mark of the first fall has been there, though the hues might be of the faintest. Now, if Adam, before his decline, had been a black, as some ethnologists still insist, he could not possibly have been more thoroughly without flaw than Uncle Tom. In him the said mark is eradicated once and forever. He represents in his person the only well authenticated instance we know, in modern times, of that laudable principle, in virtue of which a man presents his left cheek to be smitten after his first has been slapped. The more you "larrup" Uncle Tom the more he blesses you; the greater the bodily agony the more intense becomes his spiritual delight. The more he ought to complain, the more he doesn't; the less he has cause for taking a pleasant view of life and human dealings, the less he finds reason to repine; and his particular sentiments are all to match. Tom has reason to believe that Mr. Shelby will not wish him "good bye" before he starts off for the south with Mr. Haly. "That ar hurt me more than sellin, it did." Tom's wife is heart-broken at his departure, and naturally reproaches Mr. Shelby for turning him into money. Tom, always, superior to human nature, tenderly rebukes her. "I'll tell ye, Chloe, it goes agin me to hear one word agin Mas'r. Wasn't he put into my arms a baby? It's natur I should think a heap of him."

Tom "had every facility and temptation to dishonesty," but his "simplicity of nature was impregnable," and he was never known to mistake in his life, although "trusted to an unlimited extent by a careless master, who handed him a bill without looking at it, and pocketed the change without counting it." What have we been doing all these years, during which, at a great cost of time, labor, and money, we have dispatched missionary after missionary to the heathen, but neglected needful labours at home in order to effect works of superogation abroad? Before we export another white enthusiast from Exeter-hall, let us import a dozen or two blacks to teach Exeter-hall its most obvious Christian duties. If Mrs. Stowe's portraiture is correct, and if Uncle Tom is a type of a class, we deliberately assert that we have nothing more to communicate to the negro, but every thing to learn from his profession and practice. No wonder that Tom works miracles by his example. Such sudden conversions from brutality to humanity, from glaring infidelity to the most childlike belief, as are presented to our admiration in these volumes, have never been wrought on earth since the days of the Apostles. One of the best sketches in the book is that of the black imp, by name Topsy, who loves lying for the sake of lying, who is more mischievous than a monkey, and in all respects as ignorant; yet she has hardly time to remove from her soul the rubbish accumulated there from her birth, and to prepare her mind for the reception of the most practical truths, before—without any sufficient reason—"a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love, penetrates the darkness of her heathen soul," and enables her in due time to accept the responsible appointment of missionary to a station in Africa. Uncle Tom not only converts by his arguments Mr. St. Clare, his master in New-Orleans, who is a gentleman, a scholar, a philosopher, and as shrewd a a hand in a discussion as you are ever likely to encounter, but positively redeems in a moment from utter savageness and the lowest degradation wretches in whom the sense of feeling is extinct, and from whom we have been taught, until Tom took them in hand, to recoil in horror. It is no respect for religion that we feel, when Tom, beaten almost to death by his

owner, is visited by a poor woman, who offers him water to relieve his mortal pains, but who is quietly informed by the sufferer, that a chapter from the Bible is better than drink. Well-fed and comfortably-housed hypocrisy is apt to deliver itself of such utterances, but certainly not true piety in its hours of anguish and physical extremity. A quadroon slave called CASSY is introduced to the reader under the most painful circumstances. Her career has been one of compelled vice, until her spirit has finally acquired a wild and positively fiendish character. You read the authoress's vivid description, you note the creature's conduct, and you are convinced that it will take years to restore human tenderness to that bruised soul, to say nothing of belief in heaven, and its solemn and mysterious promises. But you err! In an instant, and almost miraculously, "the long winter of despair, the ice of years gives way, and the dark despairing woman weeps and prays." She, too, yields at once, and with her whole soul, to every good influence, and becomes a devout and tender Christian. This monstrous instance is outdone by another. SAMBO and QUIMBO are two black rascals, who have been trained "in savageness and brutality as systematically as bulldogs, and, by long practice in hardness and cruelty, have brought their whole nature to about the same range of capacities." When we first behold them, we are told to "mark their coarse, dark, heavy features; their great eyes rolling enviously on each other; their barbarous, guttural, half brutal intonation; their dilapidated garments fluttering in the wind," and to remember the apt illustration before us "of the fact that brutal men are lower even than animals." So long as these worthies are on the scene, their actions correspond exactly with their appearance, and with the account given of their canine bringing up; they go on from bad to worse, and at the worst, when their restitution to humanity seems utterly and forever hopeless, then it is that TOM "pours forth a few energetic sentences of that wondrous One,—his life, his death, his everlasting presence and power to save,"—that "they weep—both the two savage men,"—that Tom cries to Heaven to give him two more souls, and that the prayer is immediately and satisfactorily answered by their happy and most astounding conversion. Surely there is something more real and substantial in Mrs. STOWE's volumes to account for their extraordinary popularity than such absolute and audacious trash. It would be blasphemy to believe in such revelations; and common sense, and a feeling of what is due to our better nature will assuredly prevent all but the veriest fanatics from accepting as truth such exaggerated and unholy fables.

An error, almost as fatal as the one adverted to, is committed by our authoress in the pains she takes to paint her negroes, mulattoes, and quadroons in the very whitest white, while she is equally careful to disfigure her whites with the very blackest black. The worst negroes are ultimately taken to Heaven, but few of the fair colored are warranted, living or dying, without blemish. The case of Slavery is submitted in this work, it is true, to the reader's enlightened attention, but before his judgment can calmly set itself to work his sympathies are thoroughly secured by a lady who takes care not to let them loose again. The very first scene of the book introduces us to an offensive dealer in slaves, and to a slave proprietor without feeling, and both are bargaining for the disposal of slaves who, in personal appearance and in moral attainments, are not to be surpassed on either side of the Atlantic. What becomes of the judgment under such an ordeal, if the intellect be weak and the heart be strong? We are not ignorant of the mode in which great morals are enforced at our minor theaters, and of the means there taken to impress the imagination and to instruct the intellect by help of the domestic melodrama. A villain on the Surrey side of the water is a villain indeed, and a persecuted heroine is persecuted beyond endurance in any other place. It is very easy to adduce startling lessons from a drama-

tic work, as it is easy enough for an artist to delineate fear by painting a man with staring eyes, open mouth, and hair on end. Truth, however, demands more delicate dealing, and art that would interpret truth must watch the harmonies of Nature, which charms not by great "effects," but by her blended symmetry and grace, by her logical and unforced developments. Did we know nothing of the subject treated by Mrs. Stowe, we confess that we should hesitate before accepting much of her coin as sterling metal. Her quadroon girl is all too like the applauded slave of the Victoria. "The rich, full, dark eye, with its long lashes—the ripples of silky black hair, the delicately-formed hand and trim foot and ankle, the dress of the neatest possible fit, which set off to advantage her finely-molded shape, the peculiar air of refinement, the softness of voice and manner," are insisted upon with a pertinacity which we look for in vain when we come face to face with the less fortunately-endowed specimens of the Anglo-Saxon race. Her husband, George, a mulatto, being rather blacker than herself, is painted, according to rule, in still brighter colors. He is "possessed of a handsome person and pleasing manners," is "a general favorite in the factory" where he works, "his adroitness and ingenuity cause him to be considered the first hand in the place," and he has "invented a machine for the cleaning of hemp, which displays quite as much mechanical genius as Whitney's cotton-gin."

During his flight to Canada, George disguises himself. Being informed of the circumstance, we are introduced to an hotel in Kentucky. It was late "in a drizzly afternoon that a traveler alighted at the door. He was very tall, with a dark Spanish complexion, fine expressive black eyes, and close curling hair, also of a glossy blackness. His well-formed aquiline nose, straight thin lips, and the admirable contour of his finely formed limbs, impressed the whole company instantly with the idea of something uncommon." Who can the distingushed stranger be but M. Lemaitre or Mr. Wallack, representing for our approval and delight George Harris, the runaway mulatto? If we have any doubt it is removed at once when we are told that the said George being addressed by a stranger at the hotel "stood up like a rock, and put out his hand with the air of a prince." just as we have seen Lemaitre do it as *Le Docteur Noire*. An indifferent advocate may make one of two mistakes. He may understate his client's case, or he may overstate it. Able as she is, Mrs. Stowe has committed the latter fault, and will suffer in the minds of the judicious from the female error. With so good a cause it is a pity that her honest zeal should have outrun discretion.

The gravest fault of the book has, however, to be mentioned. Its object is to abolish slavery. Its effect will be to render slavery more difficult than ever of abolishment. Its popularity constitutes its greatest difficulty. It will keep ill-blood at boiling point, and irritate instead of pacifying those whose proceedings Mrs. Stowe is anxious to influence on behalf of humanity. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was not required to convince the haters of slavery of the abomination of the "institution;" of all books, it is the least calculated to weigh with those whose prejudice in favor of slavery have yet to be overcome, and whose interests are involved in the perpetuation of the system. If slavery is to cease in America, and if the people of the United States, who fought and bled for their liberty and nobly won it, are to remove the disgrace that attaches to them for forging chains for others which they will not tolerate on their own limbs, *the work of enfranchisement must be a movement, not forced upon slaveowners, but voluntarily undertaken, accepted and carried out by the whole community.*

There is no Federal law which can compel the Slave States to resign the "property" which they hold. The States of the South are as free to maintain slavery as are the States of the North to rid themselves of the scandal. Let the attempt be made imperiously and violently to dictate to the South,

and from that hour the union is at an end. We are aware that to the mind of the "philanthropist" the alternative brings no alarm; but to the rational thinkers, to the statesman, and to all men interested in the world's progress, the disruption of the bond that holds the American States together is fraught with calamity, with which the present evil of slavery—a system destined sooner or later to fall to pieces under the weight of public opinion and its own infamy—bears no sensible comparison. The writer of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and similar well-disposed authors have yet to learn that to excite the passions of their readers in favor of their philanthropic schemes is the very worst mode of getting rid of a difficulty which, whoever may be to blame for its existence, is part and parcel of the whole social organization of a large proportion of the States, and cannot be forcibly removed without instant anarchy, and all its accompanying mischief.

Would Mrs. Stowe have liberty proclaimed throughout the States at the moment? For her own sake and for the sake of her countrymen, we hope not. We do not believe that the blacks in America are prepared for sudden emancipation; and, if they are, we are certain that the whites are wholly incapable of appreciating the blessing. Sir Charles Lyell, in his *Second Visit to the United States of North America*, very properly remarks that the fanaticism of Abolitionists constitutes one difficulty in the way of emancipation, the prejudices of Perpetuatists another, but that the jealousy of an unscrupulous Democracy is a far more terrible obstacle than either. In the same spirit, the writer of a remarkable article in the *North American Review* last year observed, that the "whites need to go through a training for freedom scarcely less than the blacks, the master being as much fettered to the one end of the chain as the slave to the other." All impartial witnesses speak to the same effect. Mr. Featherstonhaugh, no lover of slavery, who passed years in the United States, declares that slavery is a positive blessing to every negro who would receive nothing but liberty from his owner. For, in truth, what is liberty worth to the possessor if it be accompanied with social degradation of the worst description? The manumitted slaves of Jamaica are, in the sight of the law, in the estimation of their fellows, and in the eye of God, equals with those whose actual "property" they were the other day. Importance no longer attaches to complexion in that Island. The white and colored people intermarry, colored people hold responsible offices, and are received as guests at the Governor's table. An American who visited Jamaica in 1850 states that—

"At the Surrey Assizes, where Sir Joshua Rowe presided, two colored lawyers were sitting at the Barrister's table, and of the Jury all but three were colored. Seven-tenths of the whole police force of the Island, amounting to about 800 men, were estimated to be colored. In the Legislative Assembly, composed of from 48 to 50 members, ten or a dozen were colored; and the Public Printers of the Legislature, who were also editors of the leading Government paper, were both colored men."

Compare this salutary state of things with the certain doom of the negro suddenly emancipated by his American master! The democratic horror of black blood in the United States knows no bounds. Sir Charles Lyell has a pathetic account of a young girl he met on board a steamer in America, and who was rudely summoned from the dinner table because—though free as himself—she had presumed—having one streak of negro blood in her otherwise unsullied veins—to sit at a board with a party of pure whites. He had previously been shocked by remarking that no colored man, slave or freeman, how far soever removed from the negro stock, however respectable his appearance, however cultivated his mind, was allowed to take his meals while the very meanest white on board had yet to satisfy his hunger. What avail the pathetic appeals and painful incidents, the passionate denunciations, with which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* abounds in the teeth, of such facts as these?

Let it be borne in mind that this instinctive and openly proclaimed physical disgust and abhorrence of the negro race is not peculiar to the South, but is even more strongly evident in the North; but it is no offensive characteristic of the slave owner, but is a vice equally rampant in the self-satisfied and complacent soul of the agitating abolitionist. Blacks are not stocks or stones; we know them to be capable of high civilization, and to be susceptible of the noblest emotions. Improved public opinion all over the world is doing much for them, and education and religion are doing still more. They are not unconscious of their social inferiority in Republican America, for they are hourly made to feel it. Imagine them liberated to-morrow in those portions of the United States where they out number the whites, and where they would have only to raise their liberated hands in order to strike down the traditional enemies of their race, their once tyrannical owners, their always contemptuous social superiors. Hate begets hate, and a war of races secures the rapid deterioration and decline of all the combatants. We may well shrink before rashly inviting so bloody and disastrous a conflict.

And be it stated to the credit of the slaveowners of the South, that they are fully alive to the danger of the portentous struggle, and have of late years shown no indisposition to help in their own emancipation as well as in that of the slave, provided they may only escape the dire catastrophe we speak of. It is certain that a large class of slave owners in the South are most desirous to relieve the soil of the stain and inconvenience of Slavery, if the tremendous step can be taken with safety to all parties concerned in the act of liberation. The efforts made in the South to improve the condition of the slave, show at least that humanity is not dead in the bosoms of the proprietors. Mrs. Stowe has certainly not done justice to this branch of the subject. Horrors in connection with Slavery—itself a horror—unquestionably exist; but all accounts—save her own, and those of writers actuated by her extreme views—concur in describing the general condition of the Southern slave as one of comparative happiness and comfort, such as many a free man in the United Kingdom might regard with envy. One authority on this point is too important to be overlooked. In the year 1842, a Scotch weaver, named William Thomson, traveled through the Southern States. He supported himself on his way by manual labor; he mixed with the humblest classes, black and white, and on his return home he published an account of his journeyings. He had quitted Scotland a sworn hater of slave proprietors, but he confessed that experience had modified his views on this subject to a considerable degree. He had witnessed Slavery in most of the slaveholding States; he had lived for weeks among negroes in cotton plantations, and he asserted that he had never beheld one-fifth of the real suffering that he had seen among the laboring poor in England. Nay, more, he declared:

> "That the members of the same family of negroes are not so much scattered as those of workingmen in Scotland, whose necessities compel them to separate at an age when the American slave is running about gathering health and strength."

Ten years have not increased the hardships of the Southern slave. During that period colonization has come to his relief—education has, legally or illegally, found its way to his cabin, and Christianity has added spiritual consolations to his allowed, admitted physical enjoyments. It has been justly said that to those men of the South who have done their best for the negro under the institution of slavery must we look for any great effort in favor of emancipation, and they who are best acquainted with the progress of events in those parts declare that at this moment "there are powerful and irresistible influences at work in a large part of the slave States tending towards the abolition of slavery within these boundaries."

We can well believe it. The world is working its way towards liberty,

and the blacks will not be left behind in the onward march. Since the adoption of the American Constitution, seven States have voluntarily abolished slavery. When that Constitution was proclaimed there was scarcely a free black in the country. According to the last census, the free blacks amount to 418,183, and of these, 233,691 are blacks of the South, liberated by their owners, and not by the force of law. We cannot shut our eyes to these facts. Neither can we deny that, desirable as negro emancipation may be in the United States, *abolition must be the result of growth, not of revolution, must be patiently wrought out by means of the American Constitution, and not in bitter spite of it.* America cannot for any time resist the enlightened spirit of our age, and it is manifestly her interest to adapt her institutions to its temper. That she will eventually do so if she be not a divided household—if the South be not goaded to illiberality by the North—if public writers deal with the matter in the spirit of conciliation, justice, charity, and truth, we will not permit ourselves to doubt. That she is alive to the necessities of the age, is manifest from the circumstance that, for the last four years, she has been busy in preparing the way for emancipation, by a method that has not failed in older countries to remove national troubles almost as intolerable as that of slavery itself. We have learnt to believe that the Old World is to be saved and renewed by means of emigration. Who shall say that the New World—in visible danger from the presence of a dark inheritance bequeathed to it by Europe—shall not be rescued by the same providential means? The negro colony of Liberia, established by the United States, extends along the Western coast of Africa, a distance of more than 500 miles. The civilized black population amounts to 8,000 souls. The heathen population is over 200,000. The soil of the colony is fertile, its exports are daily increasing, it has already entered into diplomatic relations with Great Britain and France. A Government is established, which might have been framed by the whitest skins; 2,000 communicants are in connection with its churches; 1,500 children attend its Sabbath schools.

Education has become—would that it were so here—a national obligation; and the work of instruction and conversion is carried on by educated negroes among their brethren, who cannot fail to appreciate the service and to accept the blessing. The refuge afforded by Liberia for the gradual reception of the manumitted and civilized slaves of the United States, we hold to be the most promising element in the question upon the tranquil settlement of which the happiness and political existence of the United States depend. It will enable America to save herself, and to achieve a work far nobler than that of winning her own political independence. The civilization of Africa hangs largely upon her wisdom. A quarter of the world may be Christianized by the act which enables America to perform the first of Christian duties. We have said that the process of liberation was going on, and that we are convinced the South, in its own interests, will not be laggard in the labor. Liberia, and similar spots on the earth's surface, proffer aid to the South which cannot be rejected with safety. That the aid may be accepted, with alacrity and good heart, let us have no more Uncle Tom's Cabins engendering ill-will, keeping up bad blood, and rendering well-disposed, humane, but critically-placed men their own enemies and the stumbling blocks to civilization and to the spread of glad tidings from Heaven.

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